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A
GENERAL VIEW
OF THE
ACTUAL FORCE AND RESOURCES
OF
FRANCE,

IN JANUARY, M.DCC.XCIII.

BY WILLIAM PLAYFAIR.

Let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he
that putteth it off.

1 KINGS XX. 11.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, PICCADILLY.

1793.

[Price One Shilling and Six-pence.]

Entered at Stationers Hall.

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GENERAL VIEW, &c.

AS a war has taken place between this country and France, it is of considerable importance that the nation at large should be able to form, as near as possible, a true idea of the force of their enemy.

The situation of France is such as is quite new in the annals of the world; and the force of that wretched and divided people cannot be estimated according to any common rules: hence it is, that, viewed in one way, that nation seems to have immense resources, and to be able, with impunity, to defy all Europe: viewed in other points, it is equally demon-

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strable,

strable, that the internal factions of the country will soon reduce it to a state of insignificance.

We must not wonder then that opinions in this country are divided, and that the public newspapers, which are so frequently the guides of public opinion with regard to the actual state of affairs, as well as the records of recent facts, represent the state of France, as to power and resources, very differently, and each according to the favorite views of its conductors.

I claim the attention of the public for half an hour on this important subject, and without pretending to any personal merit as a politician or financier, I found my claim to attention on a fact; which is, that in May last I shewed the state of French finances for the year 1792, in a much truer light than Mr. Cambon, deputy of the National Assembly, and now member of the Convention. His statement and mine are both printed, and the facts are since in my favour: I asserted that eleven hundred French millions would be necessary for the year, and he eight hundred millions. The real sum has been 1250 millions;

lions ; but then I observed at the time, that I was under the mark, and he imagined he had gone beyond it ; so that his error was very great, and mine inconsiderable.

As to affairs of general politics, I, in the same work (printed in Paris, and published in London) demonstrated the impossibility of the constitution maintaining its ground, the settled tendency of the revolution to a civil war, and a sort of republic, denouncing, at the same time, the schemes of the Jacobin emissaries upon England. I have had, and still have, opportunities to know facts that very few Englishmen can know, and therefore attribute my being right intirely to this circumstance ; which, though it may not entitle me to exult on my penetration, gives me some right to claim attention from my countrymen.

We are told that France has 2,400,000 armed men ready to engage her enemies, when we should be told that she has 2,400,000 who are not able to keep peace in their respective departments.

We are told that France has discovered a method of being able to support an expence of 7,000,000 sterl. a month, when we should be told that she has found a method of running 7,000,000 a month in debt, without any possibility of ever paying it, and with a certainty of being very soon deprived even of that ruinous resource.

We hear that France is free, and that the whole nation (a few Aristocrats excepted) is contented and happy; when there is neither safety for individuals, liberty of opinion, nor unanimity; the lowest dregs of the people being in Paris, and every where else, the conductors and tyrants of those who have the vanity to say they govern, and the weakness to imagine that any one believes them.

We are told by themselves, that their success in September, October, and November last, was owing to their courage and good generalship, when, in fact, it was owing to ill conduct, and great mistakes in their enemies.

Let us throw aside the veil which their republican gasconade has thrown upon facts, and we shall soon see that France is only superior to other nations in vanity, injustice, cruelty, and misery; in these, we will allow, she is superior to the whole human race; but neither in freedom nor in force.

First, then, there are more than two millions and a half of fighting men in France; for every man is armed, from the age of 16 to that of 60; and many I have seen bearing arms at 13 and at 70: there must, then, be more than the number specified; there must at least be four millions. This is an adroit manner, on their part, of telling a falsehood, and escaping censure: they under-rate the number to be thought within bounds; but then it is added, they *can send such a number against their enemies*, which is very false.

Never was there a time when France could send fewer men into the field, for any continuance of time, and supply them with necessities, than at present; because, in all the towns and villages, they want guards against each other; because there is no order, no
 8 regularity,

regularity, and no industry among those at home, to supply those who are in the field : for this reason we have heard of so many complaints made to the National Assembly against the minister of war (Pache). The men had neither shoes nor breeches ; for the 180 millions of assignats a month, could neither create tailors nor shoemakers. No, this enormous sum, which, in the time of Augustus, would have paid the whole expences of the Roman empire for nearly half a year, by means of order and arrangement, could not clothe the armies of Dumourier and Custine for one month.

Can there be a clearer proof than this of the necessity of order, arrangement, and industry, to create force ; and can any thing shew more distinctly the fallacy of estimating revenue by reams of paper, or force, by the total number of armed men ?

That the armed men may act, it is essentially necessary that there should remain a still greater number *unarmed*. The whole nation, “ say they,” is a camp ; and precisely, for that

that reason, there is not one regiment of well-accoutered soldiers.

The truth is, that it was by an exertion of the most violent nature, that numbers of men were collected sufficient to oppose the duke of Brunswick's army, which was but about 60,000 strong. Whole villages were depopulated of the flower of their youth in the northern parts of France; and I say it from certain knowledge, that the numbers who died from disease and skirmishes, amounted, in three months; to three times the whole number of their enemies.

The whole frontier of France, the sea-coast, and a few inaccessible parts excepted, is become a sort of theatre for the war; and I venture to predict, that when they are all covered in the manner that necessity will require, France will not be able to have, for any length of time, an army of 200,000 men in any one quarter; nor will that army ever be either well clothed or well fed.

So much for the force by land; so much for the millions that are to plant the tree of
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liberty at Vienna, Petersburg, and Pekin ; and to such a number is actually reduced that army of breechless philosophers, who are to fraternize all mankind, by spreading assignats and levying contributions.

With regard to their resource in finances, that merits a very particular investigation ; for upon that, in a great measure, depends the length of time, during which the French nation will be able to tear herself to pieces, and to disturb all Europe.

When the assignats were first issued, there was a great quantity of real specie in France. The government created them rather for the payment of debts, than for the usual purposes of the treasury.

The lands of the clergy that were seized by the first assembly, served as a pledge for the reimbursement, or rather annihilation, of these assignats ; and there was thus a real value in the paper so created. The combination was by no means an ignorant nor foolish one ; nor were precautions wanting to give that paper credit. Had the original

ginal system been carried into execution as it was planned, and had it not been extended too far, and the assignats misapplied, the scheme, great as it was, would have succeeded well, and might have had a happy termination.

To explain this, let us follow the assignats through their different stages; and, in speaking of them, let us put all the sums in sterling money, to avoid confusion; 24 livres being always counted equal to the pound sterling.

The first creation of assignats, in the beginning of 1790, was but equal to about one-fourth of the currency in specie which is reckoned to circulate usually in the kingdom; and this sum was, in great part, paid in the reimbursement of debts, contracted under different forms; so that, in the first instance, it went into the hands of persons who were rich or easy.

As the church lands began to be sold at the same time, and the assignats were taken at par in these purchases, though passing at

a loss in the common affairs of life *, the monied people so reimbursed were very likely to employ their assignats in purchasing church lands, which, in fact, they did ; and as all assignats paid for these lands were annulled and burned, the quantity of paper did not increase very fast at first.

The progress of burning, and the hopes of peace, quietness, and a revenue from taxes, when the constitution should be finished, gave, deservedly, considerable credit to a paper, which, since those hopes have vanished, and since its quantity has been so prodigiously increased, deserves no credit at all ; and, in fact, obtains not much. By degrees, however, the new assignats created became

* As there were no assignats for less than 200 livres, or about eight guineas, people were obliged to change them for silver or gold. The first day they appeared, they were changed at a loss of three per cent. but that soon mounted to five, and by degrees, in about a year, to 10. The second year they had got so far as 40 per cent. loss against gold and silver, when a manœuvre re-established them a little. They are, at present, only at 50 per cent. loss. I shall hereafter shew why they are not lower, as they have not real y any intrinsic value at this time.

more numerous, and ceasing to be paid to public creditors for reimbursements, began to be employed for every sort of payments, and supplied the place of taxes to the public treasury. The assignat paid to the poor, or to the merchant, ceased to be employed in a purchase of church lands; it was immediately passed in trade; the gold and silver, by degrees, became dear and scarce; small assignats became necessary, and were created; so that before the end of the year 1791, a traveller might go from one end of France to the other, and see neither gold, silver, copper, nor any currency but the assignats, which were at 28 per cent. loss.

The constitution was finished, and was accepted by that well-meaning, good-natured, and unfortunate king, who has so lately paid so dearly for his good intentions; who has expiated, in so cruel a manner, his fatal complaisance to a set of levellers, whose ambition and vanity could bear no superior; but who were too ignorant to see that they would themselves also be amongst the number of the victims which their own hands were preparing. Instead of tranquility and peace,
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the constitution brought on more troubles, and their termination seemed now not to be fixed. A general mistrust took place, mixt with despondency; and the assignats severely felt the shock.

One hundred millions sterling was supposed to be the amount of specie circulating in France before the revolution; but when the louis-d'ors and crowns had entirely disappeared, the quantity of assignats in circulation did not amount to more than 12 millions. This may be attributed to three causes: trade was at a stand, and therefore the mass necessary for circulation was diminished: 2dly. That portion of the money in the kingdom that was not in actual circulation, was in gold or silver; but whenever it was wanted for use, it was changed into assignats; for it is curious enough, that though at first, when people wanted to make small payments, they bought silver with assignats: at last they bought assignats with silver, on purpose to pay away.

The third reason was, that the assignats went at par in the payment of debts, of rent,
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and for many other things, of which the price could not so soon be changed; and that people parted with their assignats very readily, and had no desire to amass a kind of money that had neither intrinsic value; durability, nor even beauty to recommend it, by which means a smaller sum, by circulating more quickly, replaced the gold and silver. That being once done, there was a new cause for the diminution of the assignats in value, and it is this cause which must ultimately destroy their value altogether.

Until that terrible 10th of August, (when I saw scenes of rage and horror, which I shall never forget) the same manner of creating assignats continued; that is to say, though the number was still increasing, yet they did not pass the bounds of about two millions sterling a month, and the whole mass was then about 80 millions sterling, (not counting those that were burned); so that going on by the same progression, it would yet have been 10 months before the original quantity of specie would have been fully replaced by paper.

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From this epoch we may, however, date the last progression of excessive expence in the system of paper. September alone cost nearly eight millions sterling ; the subsequent months have each cost nearly as much ; so that, in fact, the creation of assignats, since August, is equal to above 32 millions sterling ; and in the spring, instead of diminishing, that expence must increase. The sum now created is therefore about 112 millions sterling of paper, and that is augmenting at the rate of six millions a month.

Add to this, that for some time past the necessity of manufacturing the assignats in great haste, prevents all those precautions which are necessary to avoid falsification. The wild acts of the Convention, surpassing even its predecessors in rage, delirium, and wickedness, and going, like a ship in a tempest, without any fixed guide, have destroyed that small degree of confidence that had remained so long.

What, then, has preserved any degree of credit to these assignats, seeing that there is no hope of reimbursement, but that, on the contrary,

contrary, the quantity increases more rapidly than ever.

The causes are various: the first is, that the want of order and authority over the lower class of people, who, in fact, are the masters, and who live chiefly on dry bread, has prevented the price of that article from being raised in any great degree; and it is a curious fact, that though all sorts of luxuries have increased in price, the assignat loses hardly any of its value against bread, or the bushel of wheat, which ought naturally to have risen along with silver. The assignat continues still to pay debts, rent, and taxes, at par, which serves greatly to preserve its value.

Another cause is, that in Paris, upon the Place de Victoire, where gold and silver used to be sold, the sellers have been, in a great measure, chased away since the 10th of August; and those that have been left are employed by the treasury, sometimes, to bring a greater quantity of gold than is wanted, and, by fictitious bargains, influence the market. The course of exchange is, in a
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great degree, regulated by the price of gold; and ever since Claviere has been in the department of finances, manœuvres of this kind * have been carried on to a great extent, and with considerable success.

Although it is clear, that, what I am now saying is rather an assertion than a demonstration, yet there is a fact notoriously known to all the world, which shews that the value of the assignats is not regulated by the national affairs of France; for if they were, then the course of exchange, and the price of gold and silver, would rise and fall according to the success or failure of those persons who govern the affairs of France; but it is not so. The value of the assignats hardly varied at all on the 10th of August, except for a few days; though, the constitution being overturned, it was clear that every thing was to do over again, and that therefore the probability of the speedy winding

* The same manœuvres have been carried on upon Change here in London, where the agents of the treasury in France have sold bills on Paris, or bought them at a high price, just as it suited the purpose of keeping up the nominal value of the assignat.

up of affairs was entirely lost ; and this probability, while it lasted, was certainly one cause that gave a real solidity to the assignat. While the horrid massacres of the 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th of September, were carrying on, the assignat was mounting in price ; and it astonished not a little the merchants on the 'Change at London, that the credit of the paper rose as the Prussian army approached the capital of France, notwithstanding it was generally expected that it would soon arrive there. This is a plain proof that collateral circumstances, and not confidence in the ruling system of affairs, regulated the value of the assignats.

Since the republic, as they call it, has overrun Brabant, and threatened the whole of Europe in a fit of folly and insolence, their credit sinks, and the death of their monarch, which they pretended would ensure their prosperity, has still augmented their discredit : thus that famous republic, with its claws extended on all sides, is like a crab, and goes backwards instead of advancing.

Such are nearly the reasons that operate in preserving a degree of value to the assignats, to which their real solidity does not entitle them; and these reasons are supported with force by the absolute necessity of using them, as signs of value, there being no other in the whole country.

In what manner, therefore, their real want of solidity, added to the great and constant increase of their quantity, may, in the end, operate, is difficult to guess with any degree of precision, particularly when these causes are counteracted by one so strong as *absolute necessity*; as they are the only signs of value that exist over such an extensive country.

Though from want of precedent of any kind (for the American paper dollar was, in many respects, different) it is impossible to form a near estimate of the time when this paper will have an end; yet it is very certain, that a continual increase in the quantity must diminish the value, and that the diminution must go on with an accelerated quickness; because the more it loses, the more will be necessary to supply the wants of the treasury,

treasury, and therefore the creation of paper must increase in quantity.

They who know little of the matter say, that the nominal value signifies nothing, or but little, for that two reams of paper must be printed off instead of one, and then the difficulty is finished. It is indeed true, that there is a certain degree of justness in this observation, but it will not long hold good; because the livre Tournois, though only an ideal value, is the measure of the price of many articles, which cannot easily be changed; as for instance, the price of the four pound loaf of bread, which ought to be 22 sols at Paris at present is but 12 in paper (which is but equal to three-pence English money). A change cannot be made in ordinary articles progressively, and with the same rapidity that the paper loses its value, because the mob taxes all necessary articles, and will not allow such augmentations to take place; for every man, as a buyer, considers the money he has, and compares it with what he has to buy; nor, indeed, is it possible to equalize revenues and prices in such a complex machine as the purchases and sales

sales of a great town, like Paris, according to the value of the assignat.

When, however, the nature of things is at open war with any contrivance of men, the contrivance must, sooner or later, fall to the ground.

If the continual importation of gold and silver from South America, by increasing the quantity has diminished its value so prodigiously, since the days of Henry the VIIIth, how much more must the increase of paper in France, which has but a fictitious value, decrease its power of serving as money.

The whole quantity of bullion imported into Europe in one year (one with another) has never been estimated at more than about 5,000,000 sterling, and France creates as much currency in twenty-four days. The career down hill must be then very rapid indeed.

I write this for the satisfaction of the public, and for that reason, finding that the different facts and reasonings about the assignats will

will not lead to any clear conclusion; except the general one of their decrease in value, I am willing to run the risk of giving the result of my own reflexions; should time shew me to be wrong, I hope my countrymen will excuse me.

I think then it is likely that, when the assignat falls to one-third of its value, the order of prices, with regard to buying and selling, will be so much altered and confused, that it will occasion an almost total discredit of that paper; and I imagine that discredit must take place towards the month of May, or June, next; or, at furthest, by the month of September, should our war with them continue.

As soon as the assignats cease, then the power of the present government, if government it can be called, will cease, but not till then; for I do not attempt to deny that so long as the assignat does sell at a certain price, it is not much matter what that price is, for two reams of paper, instead of one, will do, and, for the moment, answers the same end;

end; the only difference being, as I said before, that it shortens the career.

Those only who have been in France during the Revolution, can tell how powerful an engine the assignats have been: had some celebrated emigrants taken my advice in the year 1791, *in making war upon the credit of France instead of combating her troops*, we should not have had now to arm in England; so many brave men would not have bled in the field, nor so virtuous a monarch on the scaffold.

It has astonished me, during these three years nearly, (I mean ever since the month of June 1790) when the French began to turn their views to Avignon, and lay plans of general conquest, that the different nations did not perceive that all their power of doing mischief lay in the credit of the paper, which they created at will, and expended for the worst of purposes.

I wish still to dwell a little more upon this, and shall explain myself by a similitude which, though very familiar, is very applicable.

Suppose the wishing purse of Fortunatus were to drop into the hands of an individual in London, who had no religion, no morality, nor honour, but who had a sort of wild enthusiastic desire of dictating to all his neighbours, and disturbing their domestic peace; and for that purpose distributed bribes, paid emissaries, and used every effort that money enables a man to make. Would not all his neighbours soon feel the effects of this, and be rendered very miserable? and not possessing such a purse themselves, must not they be obliged to submit to a thousand mortifications and inconveniencies? Would not then their best way be to take from him the fatal purse, and put it in the fire? after which his restless, mischievous character would be no longer formidable to them, but must prey upon himself.

It is clear, that as no nation in Europe has 1,000,000 sterling at its command in a year, either for secret services, or at the free disposition of its sovereign, or his ministers, and as France has twenty, in point of intrigue, corruption, and payment of emissaries, under whatever description they may be, she is more

than a match for all the others ; if therefore we would gain an easy victory over that people, let us undermine their credit* : at the expence of their paper, we shall save our own blood and treasure, and, in fact, do them a service ; for their power of going on to massacre and rob each other cannot be too soon put an end to.

There is, I am well aware, an argument that will be used against what I have said respecting the assignats, which have now, say their advocates, all the estates of the emigrants to insure their payment ; and I know this has obtained for them a sort of credit.

I am not ignorant that there are near fifty thousand estates to sell ; but I am not ignorant either that there are not purchasers to be found in France for five thousand of them, nor for two thousand ; so that, though these lands would no doubt prove a great source of revenue, I do not see any connection they have with the assignats, nor any connection that

* It is evidently not here that the way of undermining their credit is to be discussed ; it is the expediency of the measure, not the manner of putting it into execution,

can be created between them. As to people from other nations going into France to buy lands, they may meet with a few dupes, as ignorant youths sometimes fall in amongst sharpers; but a man must be very ignorant indeed to purchase property in a country, where he must have the value set upon the produce by a mob, where his life must be in danger, and where the system of equality tends evidently to an equal division of property.

The fact is, that there are no purchasers for these lands, and that there are not at present any methods practised for diminishing the quantity of assignats.

Had France peaceable times, moderate men at the head of affairs, and no foreign war, I should consider the assignats as equal in goodness to any paper that is not payable at sight, or on a certain day; but, surrounded as she is with enemies which she has made, torn with internal discords, and about to have still more enemies, the ultimate fate of the assignats must be determined before there can be time to turn about and change the system. That the members of the executive council

of France, and of the Convention, know their strength to consist in the credit of their assignats there is no doubt; and as they know that a war with England will much hasten the ruin of that credit, it is with good reason that they wish to avoid it.

It would require infinitely longer time than I should think proper to demand of the public, to view the affair of assignats so completely as it deserves; and I own frankly I have not the vanity to think myself capable of doing the subject justice; but I think I can maintain against whoever wishes to combat it, that the credit of the assignats is nearly over, and that with them will immediately fall down to nothing the force of the French nation.

But while the assignats continue to serve the purpose, let us see how far we in England have a war to fear, and what sort of exertion the French nation is at present capable of making.

First of all we must consider the nature of the effort they have already made, which, having been successful, may lead many people
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to believe, that they are capable of making such another, and finally of conquering their enemies. The last campaign was begun too late in the season by the combined forces, and with too little warmth; they adopted it partly on compulsion, partly through a generous intention to support the emigrants; and, lastly, were deceived as to the interior state of the country. The whole weight of the campaign was laid upon the army of the king of Prussia, commanded by the duke of Brunswick, who led the only body of an army sufficiently great to make any firm resistance.

That this general did not take the precautions necessary to secure his supplies of provisions is certain; that he committed several great errors is also, if not proved, at least very strongly suspected: but waving these discussions at present, suppose even that Dumourier had all the merit possible in his conduct, the retreat of an army half famished and diseased, and in an enemy's country, was not a very great victory, gained by far superior forces. This retreat being once effected, there was not any other body of troops sufficiently numerous to make head against the French army; and

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the success of a few months, on the part of the French, was the inevitable consequence of the retreat and disabled condition of the duke's army.

To return once more to the effort made by the French to repel their enemies, let us consider that the unwise manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick occasioned the greatest effort that it was possible for a large city of 700,000 inhabitants, and a populous country, to make. I was in Paris myself, and know the feeling which it inspired. If the Duke's army arrived at Paris, after what had happened on the 10th of August, nobody could hope for mercy in that city. The Sans Culottes had begun the attack on the palace, and had been seconded by the national guards. Now as they forced all the other inhabitants to bear arms, every inhabitant, women and children not excepted, was comprehended in the revolt. The natural consequence of threatening such a numerous body of people, who had the national treasury at their command, was, that they would in a fit of despair meet their enemies with all the forces they could muster, and so they did. A multitude,

titude, composed of all ages and of both sexes, marched off to repulse the enemy, who was exactly in such a situation as rendered their numbers formidable: at no great distance from Paris, so that this multitude could easily perform the journey, and not having proper supplies either of men or provisions, could he have gained a battle, it is much more than probable that the Duke could never have arrived at Paris. His enemies, on the contrary, were prodigiously numerous, actuated by despair, and supported with every thing they wanted. It was certainly only in hopes of being seconded by a party of the people themselves, that the Duke put himself in this situation, and he had probably been misinformed; for though he might have had many friends who otherwise would have joined him, his manifesto rendered it impossible for them to act; indeed it took away their inclination; and tho' they might favour the royal cause, few people were ready to join against their fellow-citizens to put his threats in execution. Notwithstanding the advantages which the French had of meeting their enemy in a sick and famished condition, in the heart of their country, in far inferior numbers, it is much

doubted

doubted whether, if a battle had been given, they would not have lost it ; and though Dumourier, certainly with a great share of art and much to his praise, contrived to gain time till nothing but a shameful retreat was possible for his enemies, yet did he not once dare to attack that diseased army in its retreat ; insomuch that all Europe imagined there was a sort of peace made with the King of Prussia. That this was not the case has since been clearly evident, and Dumourier's enterprising spirit gives every reason to believe, that if then he did not act, it was because he knew he could not act successfully.

The overrunning Brabant and Savoy is neither a new sort of occurrence in war, nor any thing wonderful ; nor are such exploits in general of the smallest advantage. The Turks have besieged Vienna before now ; we have often overrun both France and Spain ; the greatest Emperor Russia ever had was nearly, at one time, driven from his capital, and the great Frederick of Prussia, not many years ago, was driven from Berlin ; but all this has made no great change in the boundaries of empires,

empires. We are therefore authorized by history to consider such successes as of little solid importance. But if they are of little importance to well regulated armies, they are of still less to numerous armies levied in haste, as those of France will be in the next campaign. Such armies act with the greatest advantage upon their own territory, and indeed at a distance from home their position alone is sufficient to bring about a defeat.

Invasions and foreign wars must be supported by well disciplined troops, prudent generals, and good precautions taken for supplies, but not by great and numerous armies, which it is impossible to supply at a distance.

Some persons will say that Brabant is now become a department of France, but that will not be believed by those who know that men in a country where the language is different, coalesce with difficulty with the inhabitants; or by those who know how impossible it is that the Brabançons can so soon have adopted the irreligion and levelling principles of their conquerors; principles which

it took the volatile French themselves near four years to attain, with all the incendiary writings, cabals and intrigues, that could be used, to bring them to what they are. There are, indeed, people ignorant enough to imagine, that another nation also will adopt all this at once ; it cannot be ; it can but create disgust, as actually it does. But it would require too long time, and is too foreign from my subject, to shew at present how amongst the tricks of French Legislators and Commissaries, it is one, to make the voice of the minority appear that of the majority, and thereby give every thing the appearance which suits their wishes and their interest.

The state of things then has been, during the last campaign, the most favourable that was possible for armies such as France possesses ; yet is there not a single instance when with equal numbers they have gained either a battle or a skirmish. At Jemappe their number was treble that of the enemy, and though it was their artillery that obtained them the victory, they lost more than four times as many men as their enemies. The numbers who have perished from cold, hunger, and disease

ease amongst the French, as well as in skirmishes, are as surprisingly great, as by the statements to the National Assembly they appear surprisingly small ; even at Paris the people are not the dupes of that artifice, for those volunteers who have returned have sometimes told the truth, though it is clear they dare not make it public.

The present campaign, whether England had been engaged in it or not, must be very different from the last. The King of Prussia and the whole Empire (before it was but the Emperor, as King of Hungary and Bohemia) fight for their own political existence, and therefore will fight well ; from being auxiliaries they are become principals ; instead of beginning in the month of August they are now nearly ready to begin, and they will not a second time be deceived with regard to the state of the country, neither is it likely that they will publish manifestos of the same nature.

The finances of France are prodigiously more exhausted since that period, and the remains of the unfortunate House of Bourbon,

the Dauphin excepted, who is too young to reign, and is besides a prisoner, are all with the confederate armies; and will enter France to claim what a great part of the nation still think their right, the throne of their ancestors.

As to discipline, it will not be much meliorated in the French armies since last year, because these soldiers of liberty quit their post when they chuse, and the new armies will be formed this spring chiefly from raw recruits.

Such are the prospects of France with respect to her German enemies; on the side of Savoy also there will certainly be a diversion sufficient to divide her forces, occupy a part of her attention, and exhaust her finances. Let us now come to the possible exertions of France against England and Holland.

The manning and commanding of a navy is a very different thing from sending out a land army like Dumourier's, for it depends not upon multitudes and numbers, and least
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of all upon that impetuous effort which acts only for a few weeks.

If with all the millions wasted, clothing for 400,000 men could never be had, because there is neither industry nor arrangement in the country, clothing which could not cost one million sterling, how are the ships of a squadron to be furnished with what is necessary?

For the marine of France, which never was equal to ours, there were about 1200 officers necessary, and in last August there were not 200 at all the different ports. From the brave Albert de Rioms, down to the midshipman, almost every officer was disgusted with that system of equality, which by a sort of paradox, not easily to be understood, gave the crew the right of commanding, and therefore imposed upon the officers a necessity to obey.

By land, sudden exertions may be made, and every man counts for a soldier, but it is not so by sea; the preparations are tedious, require care, and are after all limited in their extent.

extent. It is not here that the Marseillois and the assassins from the garrets in the suburbs of Paris, led on by valet de chambres and girls, will defend their country against our brave English seamen, and experienced captains.

I know, however, that the French will have men enough to man their navy, and more than they have ships to man, nor will these be landsmen; having now little or no trade, they will easily find seamen, and here it should be observed, that the poverty and misery of the country serves in some measure to give it strength, for all those men who are without work to do, and bread to eat, are ready to fly to its defence.

The French marine wants officers, and it will be impossible for them to equip, in a complete manner, above one half of their ships. They want also discipline; for it is no exaggeration of the matter to say, that the men will not obey their officers; and this is so true, that many officers who are well enough disposed to defend their country, have left the service, merely because they know that the
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men only obey whilst it is their good pleasure so to do, but that when they are displeased, they immediately put their captain in irons.

To all this it is to be added, that France will require supplies of corn and other provisions by sea, next summer, to prevent a famine, which a war with England will render it impossible for them to obtain. This may appear to be an assertion made upon the faith of those rumours of famine already spread, but it is not so.

By all statements, and amongst others those of Mr. Necker, France exported of grain of all sorts, one year with another, the value of 10 millions Tournois, which is not enough to supply the inhabitants of that country one fortnight. The quantity of grain exported on an average from any country, is the measure of the surplus produced above what is consumed, which this statement proves to be very little.

Ever since the revolution began, France has been in want of grain, and obliged to have supplies, because the circulation in the interior, from one town to another, has been greatly

interrupted, and because agriculture has been in some degree neglected.

The circulation continues to be interrupted, which cause alone is sufficient to produce a partial famine ; and last year the harvest was neglected more than ever : add to this, that the men in arms consume much more than men at home. From all these causes a famine is certain, if no supplies come in from other countries. It is, moreover, certain, that neither last year, nor the year before, were so plentiful as the year 1790, and even then there was not enough for the home consumption, without foreign aid.

From the paper read by Mr. Kerfaint to the Convention, on a war with England, as well as from citizen Brissot's report, it would appear that their views extend to South America and our territories in the East and West Indies: such propositions, in the present circumstances of France, are perfectly contemptible ; and it is only in the Convention, or the Jacobin club, that the ignorance of men is great enough to listen to them without hissing the reader from his place.

In the present war, England may likewise reckon much upon the ignorance of all those who are employed in the marine and war departments; as on purpose to have, what they called, staunch patriots, they, last year, turned out almost all the clerks and secretaries employed, and put in Jacobins who know nothing of the nature of these affairs. This will appear to be a fact of no small importance to those who know, that in great and complicated affairs, a knowledge of the routine in which business has been used to go, is very necessary.

We may likewise, in this war, count upon that spirit of contradiction which frustrates exertion in every country where there are people of different parties; and we may be assured, that the town council of Brest, and the other sea ports, will not always be of the same opinion as the minister of the marine, who will therefore be crossed in many of his operations, as he has always been in every armament for St. Domingo.

The injury that their privateers may do to our trade is the chief thing we have to fear;
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but even that is more imaginary than real ; for unless they can cope with us, or nearly so, in ships of the line, the depredations by privateers will not be of much importance.

The question of war or peace, it was not my business to discuss : I know not the secret negotiations, nor the concessions which the French might make ; but were I to have given my private opinion, it would have been, that unless France abandoned, in the most solemn and complete manner, all idea of spreading her dominion, or extending her system of equality into other nations, it would be best for us to join in bringing her to reason. Self-preservation seems to be no less the law of political bodies than of individuals ; and it is certain, that should France succeed in her projects on the Continent, England must in the end submit. I do not, indeed, imagine France would succeed though England should remain neuter ; but the possibility of her doing so would, in that case, be greater, and for that reason we ought, in prudence, to bear our part in putting an end to her career.

War is certainly to be avoided, if with honour and safety it can. The blessings of peace are inestimable, and certainly more so at this time than almost at any other; but without France abandons her system of universal liberty, as she calls it, our peace could have been of no long continuance; nor can the least faith be given to her promises, because the avowed system of the levellers is, that might creates right; and whatever they have the power and will to do, they think may lawfully be done.

It seems very clear that from a war with France we have, at present, very little to fear; we may rest assured that it will be a short one; and I am convinced, that if we act in concert with the powers on the Continent, and if, instead of a bloody manifesto like the duke of Brunswick's, a wise and mild one shall precede the army that is to enter France, nothing will be more acceptable to the great bulk of the French nation, than to see order re-established, in any manner that may form something like a reasonable government.

The French have, both publicly and privately, declared that they will send one hundred thousand men to invade this country: there is little doubt but they will attempt it, if it was for no other purpose but to rid their country of part of its unfortunate and wretched inhabitants: whether they go to the bottom of the sea in their attempt to come over, or are destroyed at the mouth of our cannon, would be of no consequence to the National Convention, as from the effect of their proceedings, a famine must, in a short time, take them off were they to stay in their own country.

By their equality they have destroyed nobility and gentry; of course, all artizans in every branch of business tending to luxury, are out of employ, and are obliged to live as a prey upon the public. For instance: What would become of the tradesmen in London, and the public at large, were the nobility and gentry to be chased out of the country? This must be better felt than it can be described, as it is well known to every individual, that all arts, sciences, and trade, have flourished, and still prosper, by the wants of the great and opulent of this kingdom.

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There are many persons in the world to whom vengeance is sweet; and perhaps it is unfortunately but too true, that the violent proceedings of the French make them very proper objects of anger. But revenge ought never to be the ruling passion of man in any case, and least of all ought it to be ever directed against a multitude, in which great numbers must be innocent, others ignorant, and only a few guilty.

Though I am, and never have concealed it, even when I ran some personal risk, a great enemy to the French democrats: though I know their villainy, and the unfairness of their way of reasoning, I am far from thinking the majority of the nation guilty; on the contrary in Paris, where the guilt is certainly the greatest, I am certain that nine out of ten deserve censure, only for not having had courage enough to act when it was necessary.

Men, individually brave, do not always act in civil broils as if they were so; because, as no single exertion can produce any good effect, they only act when they have confidence in others who will act with them. Now, very
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unfortunately for the inhabitants of Paris, as they had been accustomed to a sort of implicit obedience in affairs of government, and were obliged all at once to become governors, ignorant at the same time of the true basis of liberty, and its first principles, which it is too late for men to learn on a sudden at years of maturity, there could be no unity nor mutual confidence among them : nor could even the great necessity of the case unite the inhabitants of a city, formerly drowned in luxury and pleasure ; and, ever since its revolt, the sport of intrigue.

Before the Revolution, France was infinitely too much corrupted for its inhabitants to take advantage of the feeble state of its Monarch, so as to establish liberty ; which to men of purer manners and of a less volatile character, would, at one time, have been not very difficult. At present it is only by wading through oceans of blood, and letting adversity and time teach wisdom to them, that they can ever gain this end. Nay, it is much more probable that they will fall under the hand of some despot before they can accomplish their design ; for at present, governed as they are
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by the lower order of people, who are the dupes and agents of the most designing amongst themselves, Revolution must follow Revolution, until poverty, and equality in misery, will put an end to the contest ; for as long as they who take the lead can have the means of enriching themselves, others, who want to be rich also, will overturn them and take their place, as it has happened already.

It is unlucky that in England any language, truly descriptive of these proceedings, and of the persons who govern Paris, is disgraceful, and seems like the language of anger and prejudice. Facts seem exaggerations ; and such epithets as suit the case, can only, with propriety, be used at Billingsgate. I shall not therefore attempt to describe the manner in which Paris governs France, but shall beg leave literally to translate language which I myself have heard employed by the people in the gallery of the National Assembly to its members ; and language which had the immediate effect of making the Assembly obey. I never was lucky enough to be present at a very tumultuous debate. This is a specimen of what passed on every ordinary day,

when any question that interested the court, or his late majesty, was discussed*.

Upon a question seeming to go in favour of the king, the galleries rose, and said, with violent gestures and menaces, “ Go home, “ you rascals; you men hired at eighteen “ shillings a day; you don’t deserve them. “ Shame, shame, you betray us; we are “ your masters; you are but deputies paid; “ you have sold us to the civil list, you “ anointed curs; but we know how to be “ revenged upon rascals like you, who were “ eat up with poverty and lice till we took “ you into pay, and you dare to betray the “ nation, you dogs!”

I can only say, that the French expressions were yet stronger than those I give. This happened in an evening sitting. I was in what is called “ The Suppleant’s Gallery,”

* The question was concerning the terrace in the garden of the Thuilleries, which garden being shut, they wanted to make public, and by means of that question to animate the people against the king; in which they succeeded very rapidly, and very completely.

which

which had but few people in it, though the public galleries were very full.

The effect of these threats was instantaneous; and on counting the voices the third time, for the question had been divided, it was found to be determined against the king, against justice, and against common sense. Such was, and still continues to be, the manner in which the violent party triumphs over the majority, upon all occasions, in which it is thought to be worth while. Yet the nation in which laws are so passed, pretends to be free, and to present an example worthy the imitation of all the world. It is not from men governed in this manner that England has any thing to fear; and it is surprising that there should be men in England so lost to every sense of shame as to praise the French government; and what adds considerably to the disgrace of some such persons is, that they know, perfectly well, that what I now have said about the galleries is strictly true.

It is notoriously known to all the world, that on the 10th of August the Assembly passed decrees at the request of every black-guard who appeared at the bar, without so much as enquiring their names, in many

cases ; and all the decrees passed unanimously for several days.

Thus a ragged fellow, without coat or hat, and covered with blood, appeared in the name of the nation, and demanded the dethroning of the king ; others demanded a republic, and a convention, liberty and equality ; and, since that time, it is by the same means that they have brought their unhappy monarch to the block ; loading him, during his confinement, with abuse, from which, if his former quality of king, if even his virtues and love of his people could not exempt him, he should at least have been shielded by his misfortunes.

The French nation is in a state of madness and rage, dangerous to those who, without precaution, approach too near, as individual madmen are ; but to those who, taking the proper measures, attack them where they are least able to resist, the danger can be but small, and even then must be but of short duration. Without plan, without order, and without industry, what nation can long be formidable ? and that the French have any one of these great requisites to all success, I defy their most firm friends and

strongest advocates to prove; and till they can do so, I must persist in thinking my conclusions no less just and incontrovertible, than I trust they will prove salutary to the nation, in preventing all unreasonable apprehension or dependency.

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